Army Community Service: ACS Unit Program Early Implementation Report

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14. ABSTRACT *(Maximum 200 words)*:

The objectives of the Family Adaptation Project are to: (1) determine what constitutes good adaptation to Army life, (2) show how family adaptation is related to Army outcomes, and (3) design and test pilot programs that can improve how well families can adapt. The present report helps to meet the third objective by documenting the implementation of the pilot Army Community Service (ACS) Unit Program. The Unit Program requires the assignment of a single ACS staff member to interface with Army units and to ensure that they received the ACS services that they required. Both the process and outcome of making this change in the service delivery system were evaluated through individual and small group interviews and through a short questionnaire. Interviews were conducted with 10 Directors, 92 ACS staff members, 36 unit leaders, and 10 installation leaders who were in charge of some aspect of family support at the nine sites.

The ACS Directors felt that the main advantage of the program was that it improved ACS's knowledge of what soldiers, families, and commanders really needed. For the most part, the ACS staff was very supportive of the new program. The unit leaders were excited about the new program and what it could offer. They found it more "user-friendly" and more relevant (than the traditional program) to unit readiness. installation leaders were impressed with the team-focused, proactive nature of the new program. Their main concerns focused on the resources needed to adequately staff this effort.

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i

FOREWORD

The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) Army Family Research Program (1986-1992) clearly showed how important good family adaptation to the stresses of Army life was to the retention and performance of married soldiers. ARI's Family Adaptation Research Project (1992-1994) has explored ways of moving research facts into practical Army programs. The adaptation project has three phases. *Phase one* (2/92 - 5/93) focused on what constitutes good adaptation. *Phase two* (6/93 - 10/93) showed how adaptation contributes to Army outcomes such as soldier job stress and personal morale. *Phase three* (11/93 - 11/94) focused on designing and testing a pilot program at nine sites that can improve how well families adapt.

The present report is from phase three. It documents the process and success of pilot program implementation from the viewpoint of ACS program mangers, ACS staff, unit commanders, and installation leaders. It also draws "lessons learned" from the nine sites where the program was tried.

ARI, with assistance from the University of North Carolina, conducted the research under Task 2302, Work Unit C02, which is part of ARI's Advanced Development (6.3A) Program. The research was sponsored by the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center (CFSC) pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding between CFSC and ARI dated 5 December 1993: Improving Family Adaptation to Army Life Strains.

A draft report of these findings has been favorably reviewed by the staff of the Family Support Directorate of the CFSC during August 1994. They plan to distribute these results to all ACS Directors once the draft has been finalized.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ARMY COMMUNITY SERVICE: ACS UNIT PROGRAM EARLY IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Requirement:

The purpose of the Family Adaptation Project is to determine what constitutes good adaptation to Army life, show how family adaptation is related to Army outcomes, and design and test pilot programs that can improve how well families can adapt. The present report helps to meet the third objective by documenting how well the Army was able to implement the pilot family adaptation program, The Army Community Service (ACS) Unit Program, at nine sites.

Procedure:

CFSC staff and ARI researchers jointly developed a new method of delivering ACS services. The elements included assigning a single ACS staff member to interface with Army units and to ensure that they received the ACS services that they required. Providing services in this manner required that the affected ACS staff become familiar (via extensive cross-training) with the structure and mission of Army units and with all the services that ACS could offer.

Both the process and outcome of making this change in the service delivery system were evaluated through individual and small-group interviews and through a short questionnaire. Interviews were conducted with 10 Directors, 92 ACS staff members, 36 unit leaders, and 10 installation leaders who were in charge of some aspect of family support at the nine sites.

Findings:

The ACS Directors felt that the main advantage of the program was that it improved ACS's knowledge of what soldiers, families, and commanders really needed. They also felt it helped ACS by making it more "visible" and therefore put it in a better position to compete for resources. The biggest disadvantage is that the program would generate more demand for ACS services than the current level of staffing could accommodate.

For the most part, the ACS staff was very supportive of the new program. Their main concerns were: (1) how the program could be done within the existing resources and (2) what the program would look like when it was fully implemented.

The questionnaires given the ACS staff suggest that ACS does a better job of meeting the demands of its mission than it does at either system integration or rewarding the staff.

The unit leaders were excited about the new program and what it could offer. They found it more "user friendly" and more relevant (than the traditional program) to unit readiness. Although all of them saw its potential, some were concerned about having their support needs hinging entirely on one person.

Installation leaders were impressed with the team-focused, proactive nature of the new program. Their main concerns focused on the resources needed to adequately staff this effort.

Utilization of Findings:

A draft report of these findings has been favorably reviewed by the staff of the Family Support Directorate of the CFSC during August 1994. They plan to distribute these results to all ACS Directors once the draft has been finalized.

ARMY COMMUNITY SERVICE: ACS UNIT PROGRAM EARLY IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

CONTENTS

CONTENTS (Continued)

LIST OF TABLES

ARMY COMMUNITY SERVICE: ACS UNIT PROGRAM EARLY IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This report provides data and observations from on-site assessments at nine Army installations that implemented the Army Community Service (ACS) Unit Program during Fiscal Year 1994. The site visits were conducted within a few months of implementation. They were designed to provide an early assessment of how the Unit Program was being developed at each of these installations and to provide feedback to the Army that would be helpful in future planning for program design, training and implementation.

The installations under review were in the process of preparing their staffs and none had yet fully implemented the program. Thus, the findings from this study should be considered tentative but still important in defining the factors that are likely to predict successful implementation at early stages of program development. The data for this report were gathered from ACS management and staffs, unit commanders and supervisors, installation leaders, other agency program managers, and in limited number of cases, from soldiers and families.

ACS Unit Program Background

The ACS Unit Program is designed to bring ACS services to individuals and families within better reach of Army personnel. The program will allow ACS staff to work with a unit (usually a battalion and its subunits) for the purpose of connecting its people with proactive and prevention-oriented ACS Programs. The goals of the ACS Unit Program include:

- To connect each military unit/activity with ACS services.
- To provide a visible ACS staff member for unit chain of command on ACS programs and services.
- To more effectively help soldiers and families.
- To enhance unit skills on how to support soldiers and families.

The Unit Program is designed to be proactive and to provide soldiers and family members ready access to programs designed to prevent crises, enhance readiness, and increase self-sufficiency. It is built on the assumption that programs that reach out to customers rather than waiting for customers to come to the program are much more likely to prevent crises from occurring.

A key element of the Unit Program is the assignment of ACS staff to become Unit Service Coordinators (USC) to work directly with units as an ACS point of contact. The USC is cross-trained in all program areas of ACS and serves as a bridge between the ACS center programs and the needs for assistance within the unit. The USC is expected to assess the needs of the unit for support services, conduct regular meetings with commanders and supervisors, coordinate ACS training and education programs for the unit, provide information and referral to other military and civilian services, collaborate with unit support staff, and serve as a point of contact at the ACS for unit leaders.

Unit Program Development

The conceptual design for the ACS Unit Program began in early fall, 1993. The ACS Strategic Plan and research being conducted on soldier and family adaptation, sponsored by the Army Research Institute, influenced its design.

Nine installations volunteered and were confirmed by their MACOMs to pilot-test the program prior to broader implementation across the Army. The installations included:

- Fort Bragg
- Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Air Field
- Fort Carson
- Fort Bliss
- Fort Eustis and Fort Story
- Picatinny Arsenal
- Schofield Barracks and Fort Shafter
- Fort Myer
- Hanau, Germany

These installations, along with their MACOM representatives, attended a meeting in November, 1993 in Alexandria, Virginia to review the ACS Unit Program design and discuss plans for implementation. This three day meeting was designed to review a preliminary conceptual framework for the Unit Program and to identify key elements needed in a training manual to be used by ACS Directors in training ACS staff in the implementation of this program. The results of that meeting produced a training manual that outlined the major tasks required to implement the program. Support materials including briefings, monitoring forms, needs assessment questionnaires, job descriptions, and other related documents were also developed.

Training for the nine installations was conducted in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina in early January, 1994. All Directors from the sites were involved in the training, as well as two to five staff members from their installations. The training followed the manual and included the development of an implementation plan for each pilot site. These implementation plans were reviewed by ACS leaders from the Department of the Army and MACOMs prior to adjournment.

After the training, members of the training and implementation evaluation team conducted bi-weekly telephone interviews with the nine ACS Directors to monitor their progress in implementation. This reinforced implementation plans that had been developed in early January and provided consultation and feedback on questions and issues that arose at the installations after the training.

Site Visit Methodology

Two to three day site visits for in-process review were conducted in the last half of March or first week in April with each of the nine pilot sites. The purpose of the site visits was to assess progress toward program objectives and to help "fine tune" both the pilot program and the

2

associated training materials. The site visits were not defined as "evaluation" visits but in-progress reviews that would have the following objectives:

- Review initial progress in the implementation of the ACS Unit Program.
- Assess the effectiveness of the training and training materials.
- Determine factors associated with early implementation success.
- Identify obstacles to program implementation.
- Provide feedback to the installations on progress and suggestions for improvements.
- Provide feedback to CFSC and MACOMs on progress.
- Identify changes needed in the training manual and support materials.

A suggested agenda for the visits was provided to each installation approximately four weeks prior to the scheduled visit. The agenda included observation of ACS program operations and conduct interviews with ACS management and staff, installation leaders, selected unit leaders/supervisors and personnel from other support agencies. Separate interview schedules prepared for each of the interviews were reviewed by the Army Research Institute and Department of Army leaders prior to their use in the site visits. Interviews were scheduled for one hour with the exception of ACS which were conducted individually or in small groups for a period of one to two hours. ACS Directors were interviewed for approximately three to four hours. Each ACS staff was also asked to complete an anonymous Culture Profile on their organization, which was returned to the site visit team member during the visit. Observations of program operations were also recorded.

This report examines the results of those interviews and observations. The next section evaluates the Unit Program based on perspectives from Army Community Service Directors. The third section includes ACS staff interviews. The organizational culture of ACS is defined in the fourth section, while the fifth section reflects unit and installation leaders' perceptions. The report concludes with an analysis of the lessons learned by the evaluation team during the training and interviewing.

Data from the interviews were analyzed using comparative content analysis. All instruments from the same sources were reviewed together to identify common and unique patterns in responses. Illustrative comments were recorded and used to highlight particular points in the analysis. This summary report represents the key findings for each target group involved in the interviews during the site visits. The data from the Culture Profile were analyzed separately by quantitative statistical methods.

ARMY COMMUNITY SERVICE DIRECTOR FINDINGS

The evaluation team conduced interviews in the spring of 1994 with the nine ACS Directors at the pilot sites. These served as a baseline for early program development and an assessment of early progress in achieving Unit Program objectives. The interviews of ACS Directors covered the six major steps in implementing the ACS Unit Program: perspectives on the Unit Program plan; leadership briefings; ACS staff training; unit consultation preparation; briefing units; provision of unit services; and, monitoring progress.

Perspectives on the Unit Program Plan

Uniqueness of the Unit Program

Directors were asked to note how their Unit Program plan was different from what they had been doing prior to its implementation. Several noted that *in minor ways they already had been moving toward a unit-oriented approach but that the approach now in effect was significantly different*. One Director commented, "Now we can see who we are serving." That comment is an important indicator of how service delivery was changing. Many comments by Directors suggested *a lessening of the distance between ACS and the Army line community*. Among them were: "Program managers are now more involved with the units," and "Now our ACS staff and the commanders are putting names with faces."

This lessening of the distance helped ACS identify its customers. One Director said, "We are serving commanders as our customers." While ACS had not lost sight of soldiers and their families as their customers, the Unit Program emphasis *helped Directors recognize the importance of defining unit commanders as customers* who must be served and supported. The Unit Program, in its early development, had begun to enable ACS to know more about unit needs.

One interesting result of the establishment of the Unit Program was that *ACS personnel had become more aware and informed about their own organization*, and not just about the needs of units. The *Directors* reported that their ACS staffs had become much more aware of the breadth of their own ACS programs. One comment was, "We now have an increased capability to inform units about programs and services."

Directors consistently noted that *the "single point of contact" was a major change from the way ACS had been approaching the Army community*. This matching of ACS staff with specific units streamlined how services and needs were connected. A second consistent comment pertained to the shift away from a "center-based" organization. Going to the units reflected an organizational change that was *a significant departure from the philosophy of waiting for or encouraging clients to come for services*.

Installation Implementation Plan

Directors were also asked if they had prepared a detailed Unit Program implementation plan or strategy and if they had shared the plan with the ACS staff. Responses to this question were varied: "Our milestone plan is developed but we are off schedule by about two weeks"; "Our plan has not been placed on paper but the staff has been appraised of the strategy"; and "We have a plan that outlines our approach to the unit, including a history of unit use of ACS services,

4

use of the unit contact log, and tracking of services used each month." Several Directors had not prepared a plan specific to their installation but were aware of the implementation plan presented at the Research Triangle training in January, 1994.

It appeared that *a number of Directors found it difficult to make specific plans for implementation whereas others were skilled at establishing a plan* and working it systematically. The *Directors* who took the time and worked with their staffs to develop a coherent plan were experiencing fewer problems in building staff and leadership support.

Level and Extent of Implementation

The Unit Program Training Manual outlined 6 implementation steps. Each ACS Director was asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 to what degree implementation had occurred (1 represented "not started," 3 represented "some progress," and 5 indicated "completed").

- *Step 1, Briefing the Leadership*. All but 1 installation had completed this step.
- *Step 2, Training ACS Staff*. All but 1 installation reported significant progress or completion on this step.
- *Step 3, Preparing for Unit Consultation*. All but 2 reported significant progress or completion on this step.
- *Step 4, Briefing Units*. All but 3 installations reported significant progress or completion on this step.
- *Step 5, Providing Unit Services*. Four of the 9 installations reported significant progress or completion on this step.
- *Step 6, Monitoring*. Just 2 of the installations reported completion or near completion of this step; 4 reported they had not started monitoring. This was the only implementation step that had not yet been initiated at most of the installations. The Directors were more invested in starting the program-related activities than in tracking those activities; the merits of monitoring were not fully realized at the point of the site visits.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Unit Program

Directors were asked to give their opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of the Unit Program concept as it was described in the program manual and at the Chapel Hill training (they did not focus on the status of their own program at the time of the site visit).

Perceived Strengths of the Program

Viewpoints on program strengths complemented what had been already said regarding uniqueness of the program. Directors felt that *the Unit Program was putting ACS in touch with what was really needed by soldiers and families in the units*. They also said that the program promotes a dialogue between ACS staff and commanders. In that regard they noted that the primary merit of the unit approach was identifying commanders and their units as the target customer.

Several benefits for ACS were also mentioned: *the program gave ACS more visibility*; ACS staff was more aware of ACS services; commanders were more aware of ACS services and how to access them for their units; soldiers' needs were met more efficiently; *ACS was in a better position to compete for resources*; the program brought ACS staff together as a team; and the presence of ACS in the unit offered a better use of resources because it garnered commander support. These varied comments reflected the feeling that there are both internal and external benefits for ACS as an organization. As one *Director* commented, "The Unit Program puts the commanders in our corner."

While numerous comments reflected the Unit Services Coordinator activities, three comments struck at the heart of the program and its strengths: "This program focuses on specific unit needs"; "We are now taking a proactive stance"; and "The focus now is on education and prevention."

<u>Perceived Weaknesses of the Program</u>

While *Directors* welcomed the changes that the Unit Program brought to ACS, they noted a number of practical concerns. *The absence of additional resources was mentioned in a number of ways*: "There are insufficient assets to cover units effectively"; " The ratio of ACS staff to the mission is inadequate"; and "Larger installations may not have staff to adequately meet unit needs." One *Director* commented that the Unit Program requires "an exceptional managing of time." Another said that ACS staff "are being asked to do more without additional incentives being offered."

At the time of this survey there was great concern over how a "new" program would be integrated with existing programs and associated activities. One *Director* said, "It presents the need to cease doing some things now being done by ACS." Another expressed *concern over how to sustain an adequate level of service in those programs already in place*. The following comment expressed a common concern among *Directors* of these pilot sites: "Right now there is no model of how the program works in the unit." Many remarks focusing on program weaknesses reflected the newness of the approach and the trailblazing role of these nine installations.

These *Directors* also recognized that the Unit Program was raising expectations of commanders with regard to what ACS could do for them. Consequently, several of their comments indicated their *concern about building expectations that cannot be fulfilled*.

Even though they were positive about the need for the new approach, the early acceptance by the installation and the potential for positive impacts on ACS, they *recognized that not everyone would be converted to the concept*. One remarked that some staff members did not fully understand the Unit Program, and another felt that some of their staff might be reluctant to represent programs other than their own primary program. In particular, there were concerns over how to integrate the contract staff into the new approach.

ACS Staff Satisfaction with the Unit Plan

Directors were asked to report how satisfied and committed they felt their staff were regarding the Unit Program plan. All Directors felt there was reasonably high satisfaction with

the Unit Program plan (on a 5-point scale most reported 4 and 5, with 1 as the lowest level of satisfaction). They reported that the commitment level of their staff were also high.

Directors were asked to indicate the dimensions of lower satisfaction and commitment among their staff members. In response, one *Director* reported that *those most entrenched in doing things the old way were having problems with the new plan*. Another said that more resistance came from "long termers" and from those who had been previously less accountable to the ACS *Director*. They also noted that even the reluctant people realized that they would have to implement the program. Several seemed *concerned about contract staff and their lower commitment levels*; they noted that there were observable differences between contract and government staff regarding commitment and interest in the new program.

Some *Directors* felt that ACS staff were ambivalent about the new program. While there was recognition that the ACS tie to the Army mission would be better with the new plan, there was concern over the stress that accompanies change. One *Director* commented, "Some see the new program as another HQ initiative that is under-resourced." From the *Directors*' perspective, for those staff who viewed their job as nothing more than a job, there was less enthusiasm about the plan. However, they also *felt that commitment would increase as staff become more familiar with the program* and as more training was completed.

Installation Support

ACS Directors were asked how they felt about the level of support they were receiving from installation and unit level leadership. Many of their comments reflected the *strong interest that leadership had in the promise of a redirected, unit focused ACS*. One *Director* said, "There is excellent support because the program is for soldiers, and commanders like to make things happen for soldiers." Several Directors reported that support was stronger among top leadership and that those lower in the chain of command were in need of more education about the Unit Program.

Several comments indicated the *need for ACS to continually keep leadership informed about its needs*. One Director remarked that often too much attention was given to the problem programs and not enough to those like ACS that were doing well. Another said, "Sometimes there is the need to make leadership more aware of ACS needs." Overall it was felt that leadership trusted ACS and that leadership was optimistic about the Unit Program.

Leadership Briefings

Upon their return from the North Carolina training, ACS Directors began briefing installation leadership on the Unit Program. For the most part these briefings were confined to military leadership at the installation or brigade level, with the goal being to gain the support of decision-makers at the highest levels. Directors were *unanimous in their perceptions that the briefings of leadership were well-received*. They also reported their opinions about what facilitated and what inhibited successful briefings.

Among the factors that facilitated successful briefings were: having a good relationship with the commander; briefing materials provided by the UNC team and ARI; commanders'

familiarity with the Unit Program concept; support of commanders and staff; personal excitement regarding the Unit Program; confidence in the concept; and good knowledgeability about the concept.

Among the factors that inhibited successful briefings were: limited time in which to give the briefings; availability of commanders and staff members; contract issues that needed to be resolved immediately; and time constraints due to other important items on commanders' schedules, including training exercises. All in all, logistical matters, rather than receptivity to the new program, were problematic.

Training ACS Staff

Receptiveness of ACS Staff to Unit Program Cross-Training

ACS Directors began the process of cross-training their staffs on ACS program areas soon after their return from the training in January. This was necessary in order to allow staff to represent various ACS program areas. All reported that cross-training was progressing favorably. They felt that for the most part the Unit Program concept was understood as a result of the cross-training. They also *felt that staff response was mostly favorable and supportive of cross-training*. One staff member said to the ACS Director, "Unfortunately it took this for us to get to know what others are doing." Apparently ACS staff had learned a great deal more about what their peers were doing than they had anticipated. One Director said, "Cross-training is something we should have been doing anyway."

Even though cross-training was time-consuming, its value was recognized. Staff expectations on cross-training requirements varied, according to the Directors. One commented that ACS staff were concerned about how much new learning was required, and another commented that *an initial belief was that staff would have to know a lot more about all of the ACS programs than actually was the case*.

Parameters of Cross-Training

At the time of the site visits, cross-training was all but completed across the pilot installations. On the average, about 2 to 4 hours were spent cross-training on each ACS program. *Typically, the training was done by the program manager for each area*. Several installations were developing "smart books" that could be used by all staff. In some instances professionals outside of ACS were also involved in the cross-training (such as chaplains and people from community mental health).

Several methods were used to track the cross-training process. *Some Directors used a knowledge test for each cross-training unit, whereas others documented attendance at the cross-training*. Directors reported that staff were very concerned about whether they passed tests that were given to document cross-training knowledge.

Success and Difficulties in Cross-Training

Factors that facilitated cross-training at the pilot installations included: *staff knowledge that they had to be cross-trained in order to function in the units*; a belief that cross-training was mandated; use of the readings contained in the Unit Program Training Manual; use of the slides

8

contained in the Training Manual; knowledge of the staff as they trained others on their programs; willingness of staff to participate; recognition that they were pilot sites for future broad implementation; recognition of the need for training; and enthusiasm of the staff.

Factors that significantly constrained cross-training included: gathering staff together across multiple programs, sometimes geographically separated; deciding how to involve contract employees; keeping business as usual while training; insufficient time to become really competent; amount of time the traning requires; and scheduling of the training.

Unit Consultation Preparation

ACS Directors were questioned about their perceptions of how well prepared their staff were to be Unit Service Coordinators (USCs) at the time of the site visit. They also reported on how USCs were assigned to units, how familiar their staffs were with the military culture, and how different factors either facilitated or blocked unit consultation.

Degree of Staff Preparation

Directors felt that their *staff assigned to USC roles for the most part were adequately prepared to enact unit consultation.* They did note factors that interfered with their preparation. One was that *staff with a strong center-based philosophy were experiencing some difficulty in identifying with the role of the USC,* and another was that some people needed regular reminders that they were representing all ACS programs, not just their own. It was also mentioned that preparation was hampered by having to maintain customer service while cross-training for new roles.

One Director reported that there were substantial differences among staff regarding unit consultation preparation. A solution used to address these differences was to *team those less prepared with those more prepared.* Another Director said, "We need to recognize that training has to be individualized; each person has to be evaluated individually because their skill levels will be different."

USC Assignment Process

On all installations, ACS staff assigned to become USCs varied significantly. At some installations, only program managers or senior staff were assigned to USC roles. At other installations, nearly all program staff were assigned to be USCs. At one installation, all ACS staff except one were assigned to be USCs, including the Director. Not all Directors assigned themselves to USC roles.

Several dimensions were considered as ACS staff members were assigned to units. It was *common to assign staff based on their familiarity with a unit;* if a staff member already had a positive relationship with unit leadership every effort was made to maintain that linkage. In some cases *more senior ACS staff were assigned to those units considered more of a challenge.* Preferences were considered first, then beyond that random assignments were made. It appeared that in only one case did the Director make assignments without consulting ACS staff.

It should be noted that a problem at some of the pilot sites was a *division between the ACS staffs who were and were not being assigned as USCs*. When the Unit Program was at an early stage of development, or when only a few people were assigned to be USCs, or when the program had not been adequately explained to staff, there was often a division between the "in group" and the rest of the staff. Directors recognized this but had not yet fully dealt with some of the divisions that had occurred between program and support staff and also between government and contract staff.

Familiarity with Military Culture

Because familiarity with the military culture is important for working effectively with the units, Directors were asked how informed they felt their staffs were with Army culture. It was found that *a major change brought about by the Unit Program was that staff were becoming much more familiar with military life*. It was stated that in the past they were not as familiar as they should have been. One Director commented that, "My staff are somewhat familiar with the military culture but I think this will improve the longer we have the Unit Program." Another said that if ACS staff were not familiar with the military culture they could not function in the USC role. The degree to which staff were gaining unit familiarity varied. In one instance a USC had gone down-range with the unit in a training exercise; another had participated in unit orientation. In several cases the USC was the spouse of a military member and had gained familiarity in part because of that status. In general, it was felt that *familiarity with Army terms, acronyms, insignias, rank and grade, and unit experiences were necessary* to be an effective USC.

Success and Difficulties in Preparing for Unit Consultation

Facilitating Factors - Generally, the *factors that were identified as helpful for unit consultation preparation revolved around training*. Most Directors mentioned the value they placed on the North Carolina training and the Unit Program Training Manual. In addition, they pointed to the cross-training conducted at the installation level as a major positive factor. Command support was also mentioned as an important factor; in some cases it was noted that the development of positive personal relationships with commanders was a significant source of satisfaction and a help in preparation.

Difficult Factors - Throughout the interviews with Directors, *comments were made which reflected their concern with keeping existing programs going while introducing the Unit Program*, and doing so without additional resources. One comment was, "We are still having to do the old mission while preparing for the new one." Another said, "We have to make sure we take care of the ongoing ACS walk-in traffic." Staff time constraints and not being fully staffed were mentioned as resource deficits.

Briefing Units

Receptiveness of Units to Briefings

A second level of briefings were conducted with the units to which USCs were assigned. It was clear that unit commanders were well aware of the benefits that ACS was providing. *A*

word that many Directors used when describing unit response was "enthusiastic." One Director said that, "One commander who previously knew almost nothing about ACS was very willing to work with the USC." Discussions that occurred with commanders after the briefing indicated support for the Unit Program.

There were several factors that seemed conducive to effective briefings to the units: experience of the USC or ACS Director in giving briefings; ACS staff enthusiasm; interest of commanders; uniformity and consistency in briefings; and, preparation beforehand. *Factors impeding unit briefing were time constraints and trying to brief too much material.*

Provision of Unit Services

Establishment of Relationship with Units

A variety of methods were used to make the initial connection between the units and the USCs. Quite often the ACS Director and USC met with unit commanders; in some instances the ACS Director went to the unit ahead of the USC and in other instances the USC made the first contact with unit. Some USCs were introduced at Commander's Call, and at two installations, ACS held an open house for unit commanders. At the time of the site visit, *the relationships between the USCs and the units were evolving and fairly individualized;* relationships were still being negotiated.

Services Currently Provided

Most installations were in the very beginnings of service provision when the site visit was conducted. *Those services which were being given mainly were informational in nature*: briefings on ACS services; information for commanders; and service coordination activities. To a lesser extent, classes on certain ACS programs were being given at the unit level.

At the most mature programs, USCs were operating in several of the post units. Those USCs were providing consultation to unit commanders and supervisors, meeting with soldiers to discuss needs and make referrals to ACS program staff, arranging training sessions (most often in CAFAP program areas), and monitoring unit activities and needs. These staff varied in the amount of time they spent with their units, ranging from one-half day per week for a remote location with several units to regular visits in person and phone contacts in-between visits.

Unit Program Effects on Perceptions of ACS

It had been expected that the perceptions of ACS would be improved as the Unit Program became established. *Most Directors said there appeared to be more support for ACS,* and that leaders were more knowledgeable about ACS and were more likely to recognize the merits of ACS. One Director felt it was too early to tell exactly what the effects were likely to be.

Role of Unit Needs Assessment

In general, unit needs assessments were conducted in only a few instances. At the time of the first site visit most installations were still in the phase of establishing the new program via briefings and cross-training. In many cases *needs were being assessed through informal conversations with leadership* and with ACS professionals representing the various programs. In

general, formal needs assessments were not typically being conducted at most of the pilot installations.

Monitoring Progress

At the time of the site visit, *less attention was being given to monitoring progress* when compared to the other implementation steps. This was to be expected, given the early stage of development for these pilot programs.

Most installations, however, were *developing materials to begin tracking their Unit Program activities*. For example, it was earlier mentioned that the tracking of cross-training completion was being done by the use of knowledge tests and by recording attendance. Commonly developed forms also included a request for services form and unit contact logs (for units and individual clients). Several installations were in the process of developing a tracking system. Under consideration were forms provided at the North Carolina training; several installations were also using the forms in the Manual as a basis for their own forms.

Staff Meetings on Unit Program Progress

A key activity in the establishment of the Unit Program was *the opportunity for ACS staff to meet and process their experiences with the units*. Not all pilot sites were meeting on a regular basis; one was not meeting at all about Unit Program issues. Among those which did meet on a regular basis, the frequency of meeting ranged from more than once a week to once a month. The content of these meetings included reviews of upcoming events, updates on ACS programs, discussion of staff concerns, strategies for dealing with reluctant commanders, and methods to cope with job stress. It appeared that the *agenda for these meetings was informal with ample time for discussion among staff*.

When asked how ACS staff felt after leaving these staff meetings, the Directors expressed mixed responses. One Director said, "They have mixed feelings, from feelings positive to feeling overwhelmed." Another said that the staff felt, "Optimistic but overwhelmed." Apparently *the meetings tended to be positive because of the chance to have productive dialogue*. However, along with that were tensions because of program demands and changes.

Success and Difficulties in Monitoring Progress

Directors felt that having the *Unit Program Manual was a major resource* and facilitating factor in monitoring progress. Another positive factor was having the input of ACS staff and interacting with ACS Directors at other pilot sites. One Director said that a difficult factor in monitoring progress of the Unit Program was that many other ACS issues still demanded their attention.

Perspectives on Marketing, Training, and Program Implementation

Marketing Efforts

When asked to give some indication of their marketing activities, Directors reported that they *did a lot of "one-on-one" marketing to key people*. Among the outlets that were being used

to present the Unit Program were brochures on ACS, bulletin board flyers, and installation newsletters and newspapers.

Implications for Training

When asked to discuss their suggestions for the training of other ACS Directors, one said to work diligently on developing an installation staff training plan. Another Director said that they should *concentrate on the practical aspects of program implementation.*

Implications for New Program Implementation

The final question in the survey focused on what Directors at these pilot sites thought those at other installations should know about Unit Program implementation. They suggested that:

- Briefers must be well-trained and experienced
- The unit POC is important for ensuring that ACS information gets into a unit
- This proactive approach is superior to the reactive mode that often is found in ACS
- Greater closeness to the customer improves services
- Customers are better informed about ACS because of the Unit Program
- Program use will increase as a result of the Unit Program
- Organizational effectiveness will increase as employees broaden their knowledge of all ACS programs
- Anticipate greater difficulties regarding implementation at larger installations
- Be flexible
- Be careful about contract personnel ("We should be telling them what to do, not them telling us what they will do")
- Be sure that all your staff understands the concept

Conclusions

According to the reports of ACS Directors, the pilot sites were having similar experiences, both positive and negative, as they implemented the program. All were *grappling with the need to keep existing services going while cross-training and implementing* a new approach. All were dealing with keeping the morale of staff high while asking them to redirect their thinking and efforts. However, not all were receiving the same level of command support. Though progressing at different rates, *almost all were implementing the program appropriately.* They were more likely to embrace the training and briefing components of implementation than they were those relating to tracking program activities and success. Monitoring was given a relatively low priority at the time of the site visits. *Directors were positive about the Unit Program but recognized the substantial work* that its implementation required.

ARMY COMMUNITY SERVICE STAFF FINDINGS

Each ACS staff member was separately interviewed during the site visits. Overall, 92 ACS staff participated in these interviews. The questions asked paralleled those asked of Directors. The survey of ACS staff covered 7 areas: unit program plan, ACS staff training, unit consultation preparation, briefing units, providing unit services, monitoring progress, and implementing new programs.

Unit Program Plan

Distinctiveness of the Plan

When asked to discuss how the Unit Program was different from what they had been doing, ACS staff commented in a variety of ways. Foremost among their comments were those that involved the new ways in which ACS was presenting itself, such as "We *now are seen more as a proactive organization that is involved in prevention, and not just intervention.*" One staff member said, "We are now doing more to help soldiers help themselves."

A number of remarks indicated staff perceptions of how much more ACS was becoming integrated with the Army community: "This approach gives us a better picture of what is happening on the installation"; "More people are aware of ACS and this has led to more demands for our services"; "We have greater exposure to the units"; and "We now have more community involvement." Other comments showed how the Unit Program was seen as being *more tied to mainstream Army interests.* One staff member said, "We are more tied to accomplishing the mission." Others noted that the plan *improved communication channels with leadership*, and more specifically, promoted a good working relationship with commanders.

Strengths and Obstacles

Many of the distinctive aspects of the Unit Program plan were also considered as its strengths. As an example, the proactive approach was often mentioned as a strength. The *focus on the military unit was also defined as a strength* as reflected by these comments: "Services are now tailored to unit needs"; "The problems of the unit are solved more quickly"; and "ACS is more user-friendly."

ACS staff felt that the *new plan was improving soldiers' access to services*, and was also getting commanders more directly involved with ACS. They noted that the *units and ACS were now more aware of one another* and also better informed about one another. These improvements were direct results of the liaison/service coordination role of the USC, and the "single point of contact" feature of the plan.

ACS staff also had numerous concerns about the plan and its implementation. They were anxious about the unknown, in that the *Unit Program plan represented a very different approach for most staff.* Accompanying that anxiety was the concern about increased work load. One person said, "There is too much work already, so I am not sure where the time will come from." Numerous other comments reflected *concern over demands on the ACS staff, especially in short-staffed situations* (or at those installations where program staffing is just one person deep). Another comment was, "We just can't do it as it is now designed."

Several comments indicated concern over promising too much and then having difficulty delivering on those promises. Some staff said that already *some units wanted more than they felt ACS could deliver*. It was also said that while some units expected too much, others did not know what to do with the USC. Other weaknesses identified by ACS staff included: families may not be adequately connected to ACS through unit leaders; a good understanding of the unit is required; and, not all commanders are receptive.

Some *ACS staff also referred to their own stress levels*. One person felt that no consideration had been given for the ACS staff and their stress. While the new concept was seen as positive and needed, some feared that it might take a toll on ACS staff.

Satisfaction with the Plan

ACS program staff were asked how satisfied they were with the Unit Program plan. Just one person indicated "very dissatisfied" and *one-third said they were "very satisfied" with the plan; another 38% indicated they were mostly satisfied with the plan*. However, among their concerns were the following: having staff at very different grades doing the same USC job, difficulty in anticipating what will be needed by the units, being realistic with commanders regarding what ACS can do for their soldiers, some staff are more comfortable with the old way of doing things, and not all staff agree with the concept.

Even though most ACS staff agreed with the Unit Program concept and were pleased with the new direction, the *interviews tended to be dominated by people with concerns and legitimate issues facing an organization experiencing change*. Some felt that the plan was moving slower than it should because there were not enough staff to do otherwise. Others felt that the Unit Program was taking a toll on current program viability and on clients. Some said that they would like to have more background on the Unit Program and its development.

ACS Staff Training

Anticipated Job Changes

The survey of ACS staff asked how they thought their jobs would change as a result of the Unit Program. Many comments were oriented around "time" issues. For example, one person said that the *new program required greater planning of time and of activities*. Another said that more time would be spent in giving classes and less time working one-on-one. Yet another commented, "I will be spending more time out of the office, and more time on updating information on ACS programs." A staff member commented quite accurately that, "There will be less office orientation and more unit orientation." The *need to effectively balance the many dimensions of ACS job responsibilities came across in comments quite consistently*.

Feelings about Cross-Training

At the time of the site visits, most cross-training activities had been completed. Several ACS staff had missed parts of the cross-training but were in the process of making up those deficits. Most program managers served as the main cross-trainers for their specialty areas. Most of their *comments about the cross-training experience were positive*: "I am far more knowledgeable about ACS"; "It has been an eye-opener"; "It's good to understand what the other

areas do"; "It has helped reduce fragmentation between staff"; and, "Staff now look more to each other for support." *However, not all comments were positive.* One person asked, "Am I now as important as I once was?" Another person felt that cross-training was a good process but did not feel comfortable representing the other program areas. Another suggested that *the cross-training was incomplete, and that it should be ongoing.*

Preparing for Unit Consultation

USCs for the most part had been assigned to units, and each USC had between one and four units as their responsibility. Matching the USC to the unit took a variety of forms: *most often the ACS Director worked with the staff in developing equitable assignments. When possible, the staff were matched according to their previous experience with the unit.*

Readiness for the USC Role

When asked about how ready they felt to assume the USC role, ACS staff were candid in their perceptions. The responses ranged from "I feel well-prepared" to "I do not feel ready at all." One person said, "I am a little reluctant because I have not done this sort of work before." Several felt that they *could use more time with program managers in cross-training.* Other concerns had to do with being away from the office and needing more materials to adequately represent ACS programs. In many respects *the concerns voiced will be addressed by gaining experience* with the units and by cross-training updates.

Briefing Units

At those installations that had begun to make unit contact, most ACS staff had been introduced to the units assigned to them. The *majority were introduced through briefings of large groups.* Most often, the ACS Director conducted the briefing with the USC in attendance.

Providing Unit Services

At the time of the survey the actual provision of unit services was at an early developmental level. Providing services to the unit was defined broadly. For the most part *unit needs assessments had not been done formally.* In most cases staff were informally talking with commanders and were still in the process of educating about the Unit Program.

Monitoring Progress

As was indicated by the ACS Directors, *monitoring was typically in the planning stage.* Most of the programs were adapting and shortening the forms included in the training manual. A number of ACS staff were concerned about what monitoring might require them to do. Some were unclear about what role monitoring would take in the program, others felt there would be too much paperwork, and others felt that too much time would be spent on "counting." When asked about the use of the forms that had been provided in the training manual, one person said, "I don't have a clue about what to do with them."

16

<u>Staff Meetings on Unit Program Progress</u>

There were several questions that dealt with staff meetings focusing on the Unit Program. Most *comments about these meetings were positive and suggested that the meetings were helpful*: "People look forward to them"; "I leave the meetings energized but overwhelmed because we are short-staffed"; "I leave feeling more knowledgeable"; and "The meetings leave me thinking about how the process can be improved and made more manageable."

There were negative comments about staff meetings. One person commented about the meetings being too long and monopolized by a few, and another said the meetings had been more productive when cross-training was the focus.

Implementing New Programs

The closing question in the ACS Staff Survey asked their opinions on what ACS programs at other installations should know about the Unit Program. *Most of the comments pertained to staff preparation and matters more internal to ACS*: "Working together is more important and effective than working alone"; " The program should not be attempted if ACS is not fully staffed"; "*It would help if the implementation process was gradual*"; "The ACS Director needs to have direction"; "Training needs to be formal and systematic"; "Emphasize team-building"; and "Prepare ACS staff for the added stress that the Unit Program may bring." An important response to this final survey question was the urging to define what constitutes successful USC role performance.

Other final comments pertained more to units and commanders: "Impress upon commanders that they are gaining augmented staff through this program"; "Remember that it takes time for the units to give ACS the trust it needs to be effective"; and "Set the boundaries on what a USC is and is not."

Conclusions

This survey of 92 ACS staff focused on their experiences with implementing the Unit Program. They were *supportive of the new plan for the most part*. However, they expressed much concern over the reasonableness of carrying out the plan in the absence of new resources. When the survey was administered, ACS staff were in the early stages of becoming familiar with the USC role, its activities, and its responsibilities. Therefore, *many were concerned with how the Unit Program in concept was going to play out in reality*.

ARMY COMMUNITY SERVICE PROFILE FINDINGS

This section of the report presents the results from the Army Community Service Profile that was administered to ACS staff at the nine implementation installations. Twenty-four characteristics of organizational culture were evaluated, which define eight underlying subdimensions that have been associated with organizational effectiveness in the literature: Team Orientation (TO), Innovation (IN), Outcome Orientation (OO), Customer Orientation (CO), Rewards (RE), Job Clarity (JC), Respect for People (RP), and Participatory Leadership (PL). *These eight subdimensions may be used to define three broader aspects of organizational culture* that reflect the challenges of *external adaptation* (mission accomplishment), *internal adaptation* (system integration), as well as the *extrinsic rewards and opportunities that staff receive from their jobs* (member morale).

Two versions of the profile were distributed to ACS staff for self-administration: the culture profile and the transition profile. The culture profile assessed the attitudes of staff about the functioning of the ACS at which they were employed. Staff were asked to indicate the extent to which each of the 24 characteristic was descriptive of their ACS. The response continuum ranged from 1 "Not Descriptive" to 7 "Very Descriptive." The transition profile assessed the same 24 characteristics but each were evaluated for their importance in promoting the successful transition of the ACS from its former centralized model of service delivery to its new unit program model. The response continuum ranged from 1 "Not Important" to 7 "Very Important."

Staff members at each ACS were asked to complete the two profiles without consulting their colleagues. To ensure their confidentiality and privacy, they were instructed not to place their names of the profiles. After they completed the profiles, they were instructed to fold them, to seal them in a regular size mailing envelope that was included, and to return them to the evaluation team member. Ninety ACS staff members across the nine installations returned completed profiles. More than two-thirds of staff (69.3%) who returned completed profiles were female, and the average respondent had been employed at their current ACS for approximately 30 months. Yet, the median length of employment was less (21 months), and the most frequent response was 12 months (21.3%). Approximately 12% of ACS staff members had been employed in their centers for five or more years.

Analysis of Individual Characteristics

Table 1 lists each of the 24 characteristics associated with organizational effectiveness, which are ranked by their importance in promoting the successful transition of the ACS from its former model of service delivery to its new Unit Program model. Each characteristic is associated with one of eight summary subscales of organizational effectiveness. The rankings for the transition profile are shown in the first column; the rankings for the culture profile are depicted in the second column. These ranks were determined by taking the average of the ratings of each characteristic by ACS staff members.

Table 1. Characteristics of Organizational Effectiveness

Characteristics (Subscale Dimension)	Transition Profile[a] Rank (Mean)	Culture Profile[b] Rank (Mean)
Stresses Customer Satisfaction (**CO**)	1 (6.81)	1 (6.10)
Values Teamwork (**TO**)	2 (6.78)	9 (5.43)
Maintains Open Communication with Customers (**CO**)	3 (6.77)	4 (5.73)
Puts Needs of Customer First (**CO**)	4 (6.74)	3 (5.87)
Emphasis on Information Sharing (**PL**)	5 (6.67)	8 (5.47)
Encourages Cooperation (**TO**)	6 (6.64)	5 (5.61)
Appreciates Team Contributions (**TO**)	7 (6.64)	7 (5.52)
Open to Change (**IN**)	8 (6.60)	18 (5.09)
Values its People (**RP**)	9 (6.57)	17 (5.11)
Welcomes New Ideas (**IN**)	10 (6.57)	15 (5.17)
Respects Employees (**RP**)	11 (6.51)	10 (5.34)
Willingness to Experiment (**IN**)	12 (6.50)	14 (5.18)
Stresses Participatory Decision-Making (**PL**)	13 (6.43)	19 (4.92)
Appreciates Individual Differences (**RP**)	14 (6.40)	16 (5.13)
Results Oriented (**OO**)	15 (6.37)	6 (5.56)
Emphasis on "Being the Best" (**OO**)	16 (6.33)	2 (5.91)
Constructive Staff Performance Appraisals (**JC**)	17 (6.33)	12 (5.21)
Job Descriptions that Match Responsibilities (**JC**)	18 (6.25)	21 (4.81)
Opportunities for Professional Growth (**RE**)	19 (6.24)	23 (4.52)
Rewards Good Performance (**RE**)	20 (6.23)	22 (4.79)
Written Standards for Job Performance (**JC**)	21 (6.20)	13 (5.19)
Few Do's and Don'ts (**PL**)	22 (6.00)	20 (4.83)
Focuses on the "Bottom Line" (**OO**)	23 (5.89)	11 (5.29)
Opportunities for Advancement (**RE**)	24 (5.75)	24 (3.72)

Note: TO = Team Orientation, IN = Innovation, OO = Outcome Orientation, CO = Customer Orientation, RE = Rewards, JC = Job Clarity, RP = Respect for People, PL = Participatory Leadership.
[a] How important is this characteristic to the successful transition of the ACS from its former centralized model of service delivery to its new unit program? (1 = Not Important to 7 = Very Important)
[b] To what extent is this characteristic descriptive of the Army Community Service at which you are employed? (1 = Not Descriptive to 7 = Very Descriptive)

Not unexpectedly, given that each of these characteristics has been associated with organizational effectiveness in the literature, *each characteristic on the transition profile received a relatively high mean score.* Mean scores ranged from a low of 5.75 for "Opportunities for Advancement" to 6.81 for "Stresses Customer Satisfaction" on a rating scale from 1 = "Not Important" to 7 = "Very Important." In every case, the mean rating for the characteristic on the transition profile is higher than its corresponding mean rating on the culture profile. *The magnitude of this discrepancy can be interpreted as the amount of growth that is required to ensure the successful transition to the unit program concept.*

19

The *importance of customer orientation in promoting the move to a unit program model is clearly shown* in examining the highest four rated characteristics on the transition profile. Of these four characteristics, three are concerned with various aspects of customer responsiveness: "Stresses Customer Satisfaction," "Maintains Open Communication with Customers," and "Puts Needs of Customers First." The other characteristic ranked in the top four is associated with team orientation: "Values Teamwork." The good news for ACS is that ACS staff also rated each of the three customer orientation characteristics in the top four characteristics that are most descriptive of the ACS at which they are currently employed. This finding suggests that *ACS's existing culture supports the unit program model.*

Although each of the characteristics on the transition profile received a fairly high mean rating given that response choices ranged from 1 to 7, it is interesting to note how certain clusters of items received relatively lower mean scores. In particular, two sets of characteristics tended to cluster in the lower ranks on the transition profile: those associated with both Job Clarity (JC) and Rewards (RE). Several of these characteristics are also among the characteristics that are in the lower ranks of the culture profile, particularly "Opportunities for Advancement," "Opportunities for Professional Growth," "Rewards Good Performance," and "Job Descriptions that Match Responsibilities." These findings suggest that *ACS staff neither prioritize nor necessarily receive benefits and rewards that are associated with extrinsic aspects of organizational participation.* Although it is not possible with these data to determine the causal order between the ratings of corresponding characteristics on the transition profile and the culture profile, it *may be that ACS staff give lower ratings to items on the transition profile that fail to be descriptive of the ACS at which they are employed.* It may be useful to further explore the nature of these findings by conducting some face-to-face interviews with ACS staff.

Analysis of Eight Subdimensions

As compared to Table 1, which separately lists each of the 24 characteristics of organizational culture, Table 2 provides an easier way to examine discrepancies between mean ratings on the transition profile and the culture profile. Each of the 24 characteristics is associated with one of eight summary subdimensions of organizational effectiveness on both the transition profile and the culture profile (see Table 2). Three characteristics are used to define each subdimension (see Table 3). Scores for each subdimension were calculated by taking the mean of the ratings provided by ACS staff on the three respective characteristics. Parallel procedures were used to calculate scores on both the transition profile and the culture profile. Since the mean is taken, the original 7-point response continuum is maintained for each subdimension on both profiles.

The respective profile subdimensions are listed in Table 2, rank-ordered from high to low by the mean of their ratings on the transition profile. The mean ratings for subdimensions of the transition profile are listed in the first column of Table 2; the mean ratings for subdimensions of the culture profile are listed in the second column of Table 2. The third column in Table 2 reflects mean differences in the mean ratings on each respective subdimension of the transition and culture profiles.

Table 2. The Eight Subdimensions of Organizational Effectiveness

Profile Subdimension	Transition Profile[a] Rank (Mean)	Culture Profile[b] Rank (Mean)	Mean Difference[c]
Customer Orientation (CO)	1 (6.77)	1 (5.90)	0.88
Team Orientation (TO)	2 (6.69)	3 (5.52)	1.12
Innovation (IN)	3 (6.56)	5 (5.13)	1.40
Respect for People (RP)	4 (6.49)	4 (5.20)	1.24
Participatory Leadership (PL)	5 (6.36)	6 (5.06)	1.29
Job Clarity (JC)	6 (6.26)	7 (5.05)	1.14
Outcome Orientation (OO)	7 (6.20)	2 (5.58)	0.59
Rewards	8 (6.08)	8 (4.33)	1.72

a 1 = Not Important to 7 = Very Important.
b 1 = Not Descriptive to 7 = Very Descriptive.
c Calculated by subtracting the respective culture profile score from the respective transition culture profile score for all participants and dividing by the number of participants. This mean difference score can range theoretically from -6.0 (Culture Profile Score Exceeds Transition Profile Score) to 6.0 (Transition Profile Score Exceeds Culture Profile Score).

Table 3. Interpretation Guide

Team Orientation (TO)	Rewards (RE))
•Values Teamwork	•Opportunities for Advancement
•Appreciates Team Contributions	•Rewards Good Performance
•Encourages Cooperation	•Opportunities for Professional Growth
Innovation (IN)	**Job Clarity (JC)**
•Welcomes New Ideas	•Written Standards for Job Performance
•Willingness to Experiment	•Job Descriptions that match responsibilities
•Open to Change	•Constructive Staff Performance Appraisals
Outcome Orientation (OO)	**Respect for People (RP)**
•Results Oriented	•Respects Employees
•Emphasis on "Being the Best"	•Appreciates Individual Differences
•Focuses on the "Bottom Line"	•Values its People
Customer Orientation (CO)	**Participatory Leadership (PL)**
•Puts Needs of Customer First	•Few Do's and Don'ts
•Stresses Customer Satisfaction	•Stresses Participatory decision making
•Maintains Open Communication with Customers	•Emphasis on Information Sharing

Each subdimension on the transition profile received a generally high mean importance rating by ACS staff. Yet, *"Customer Orientation," Team Orientation," and "Innovation" received the highest mean ratings* (each above 6.5), *suggesting that these three subdimensions were seen by ACS staff as most important to the successful transition of ACS* to its new unit program model. "Customer Orientation" received the highest mean rating on the transition profile, a finding that is not surprising given the mean ratings of characteristics associated with this subdimension on the transition profile in Table 1. On the other hand, *"Job Clarity," "Outcome Orientation," and "Rewards" received the lowest mean ratings* (each below 6.3), suggesting that ACS staff saw these subdimensions as important but relatively less instrumental to

the success of the unit program model. Again, not surprising given the mean ratings of characteristics associated with rewards on the transition profile in Table 1, "Rewards" received the lowest mean ratings on the transition profile.

When the mean discrepancies were compared between each corresponding subdimension on the transition profile and the culture profile, in each case, the positive mean scores reflected higher mean ratings on the transition profile than on the culture profile across subdimensions. As was discussed in the review of Table 1, this finding suggests that *ACS staff consider the current operation of their ACS to fall short of the level of organizational effectiveness that will be required to ensure the successful transition of the ACS* from its former model of service delivery to its new Unit Program. The greatest level of discrepancy was found on the subdimension that received the lowest mean rating on the transition profile: Rewards (Mean Difference = 1.72). Other subdimensions that had mean differences greater than 1.20 included "Innovation," "Participatory Leadership," and "Respect for People." It may be useful to have ACS staff to discuss strategies for promoting an organizational culture that makes the operation of the ACS more congruent with the type of culture that helps ensure the successful implementation of the Unit Program.

Relatively small mean discrepancies were found on two of the eight subdimensions of organizational effectiveness: "Outcome Orientation" and "Customer Orientation." As seen in Table 4, both of these subdimensions are associated with external adaptation (mission accomplishment). In general, these findings suggest that the *ACS does a better job meeting the demands of its mission than it does at either system integration or rewards* (see Table 4). *Without investments in its people and the capacity of its people to work effectively as a team in a supportive, rewarding, and structured internal environment, the long-term success of the ACS may be thwarted by high turnover and lower staff morale.* In addition, the ACS may find that staff resist new innovations in service delivery, even when they promote higher external adaptation.

Table 4. Ranking of Broader Dimensions of Organizational Culture

	Transition Profile[a]	Culture Profile[b]	
Broader Dimension	Rank (Mean)	Rank (Mean)	Mean Difference[c]
Internal Adaptation[d]	1 (6.52)	2 (5.20)	1.29
External Adaptation[e]	2 (6.48)	1 (5.73)	0.75
Rewards[f]	3 (6.18)	3 (4.69)	1.43

[a] 1 = Not Important to 7 = Very Important.
[b] 1 = Not Descriptive to 7 = Very Descriptive.
[c] Calculated by subtracting the respective culture profile score from the respective transition culture profile score for all participants and dividing by the number of participants. This mean difference score can range theoretically from -6.0 (Culture Profile Score Exceeds Transition Profile Score) to 6.0 (Transition Profile Score Exceeds Culture Profile Score).
[d] Internal adaptation was measured by the sum average of Team Orientation (TO), Innovation (IN), Respect for People (RP), and Participatory Leadership (PL).
[e] External adaptation was measured by the sum average of Outcome Orientation (OO) and Customer Orientation (CO).
[f] Rewards was measured by the sum average of Rewards (RE) and Job Clarity (JC).

UNIT AND INSTALLATION LEADER PERCEPTIONS

Approximately 36 unit leaders and 10 installation leaders (e.g., DCAs, DPCAs, FSDs, CFA Chiefs) were asked about their perceptions of the Unit Program. These leaders were personally interviewed so that first-hand knowledge and impressions of the new unit-based program initiative could be assessed. The leaders interviewed had been briefed either by an ACS Director or by their USC.

Unit leaders' views about the Unit Program are presented under 4 main headings: 1) reactions and receptivity to the program, 2) perceptions of potential benefits, 3) essential factors for success, and 4) perception of the role of the USC. Since installation leaders' expectations concerning the USC role were not directly assessed, their comments are reported along with the unit leaders' information only under the first three main headings of this report.

Reactions and Receptivity to the Unit Program

Unit Leaders' Perspectives

Generally, unit leaders seemed to be well informed about the Unit Program and responded very favorably to the concept. They indicated that while they had been pleased with ACS's performance in the past, they were *excited about the new program and what it could offer*. They seemed to be most pleased with the proactive orientation of the program and the emphasis on personalized service. Most mentioned that they were happy that ACS was setting up a system where representatives would be coming out to their units and offering help. Most leaders were pleasantly surprised to hear during their briefings about all the programs and resources ACS had to offer. *The Unit Program was perceived by the leaders interviewed to be more "user friendly" and consequently more relevant to unit readiness*. Leaders indicated that having a USC in the field would give ACS additional credibility and increase the likelihood that ACS would become integrated into the life of the unit. As one leader proclaimed, "This is one of the best programs they have ever come up with." A commander of a unit with an assigned USC claimed, "For the first time, ACS means much more than three letters to me!"

All of the leaders interviewed appeared to be well informed about the parameters of the new Unit Program and *seemed to have realistic expectations about what the USC would be able to do*. A number of the leaders interviewed noted, however, that instituting this program would be a significant challenge to the status quo and would require patience as the program became integrated into the Army system.

Some reservations regarding the Unit Program were expressed. Unit leaders noted that their positive perceptions of the Unit Program might not be shared by all other leaders in their position. For instance, it was noted that some leaders might perceive the outreach efforts of the Unit Program as being too aggressive. Also, some of the leaders on installations where aspects of the Unit Program had already been evolving stated that the program did not seem to be all that different from what had been going on in the past. Apparently some of the nuances of the program had yet to be made clear to them. While leaders said that *they looked forward to having the USC as a point of contact with the ACS, some expressed concern about their ACS support hinging entirely on one person*. The concern was that under these conditions, the USC could

actually end up being a barrier to ACS support for their unit if the USC failed to be a good liaison. Leaders stated that it will take time for some commanders to see what ACS really has to contribute to accomplishing their mission. They pointed out that the *Unit Program needs to be protected from pre-judgment and premature evaluation for it to be successful.*

Installation Leaders' Perspectives

The general reaction of installation leaders to the Unit Program was a positive one. They were *particularly impressed with the team-focused, proactive nature of the program initiative.* As one leader noted, "this sounds like a good business program... it's team focused and marketing is everything...sounds exciting." Most leaders believed that the Unit Program *should do a good job of sensitizing ACS staff to the needs of their primary customers* (i.e., the soldiers and their families) and should improve program development and delivery. Only one installation leader indicated that ACS was "OK" as it was and that no change in program structure and delivery was necessary. This leader believed that commanders were not expecting tailored programs or personal contact. In his view, putting an additional strain on resources was, therefore, not justifiable.

Potential Benefits for Commanders

Unit Leaders' Perspective

The primary benefits for the unit commander as perceived by the unit leaders interviewed can be best summarized into 2 categories: 1) having a personal point of contact, and 2) improving unit management and efficiency.

Having a personal point of contact was the single most important benefit mentioned by the unit leaders. Having a USC would improve ACS visibility and would encourage soldiers and their families to go directly to the USC without unduly involving the commanders. Leaders *believed that soldiers would be more apt to seek help* on their own and that this help would be more likely to benefit the soldier and the family since it would be received under more certain conditions of confidentiality. The commander would only be involved when deemed appropriate.

The unit leaders saw themselves benefiting from having the USC because this would provide them a point of contact to rely on at ACS. Having such a contact would ease their minds about whether they were doing their part in making sure that their soldiers and families were receiving the "latest and greatest" of the social services the Army had to offer. They also believed that *the USC in the field would be in a better position to coordinate ACS programs* and help build a sense of community. Many leaders saw that they themselves could become better "plugged into" the needs of the unit via the USC.

Leaders pointed out that they spent a large portion of their time managing "soldier care and taking care of soldier personal problems." By having a USC, *commanders would now have immediate access to a professional with up-to-date information critical for identifying key personnel and family issues and locating resources to deal with the issues.* Some leaders indicated that the USC would thus be able to reduce some of the unnecessary "red tape" often associated with social services. The USCs would be able to tailor the services available to the

soldiers by knowing the characteristics and anticipating the needs of the unit they were serving. Some leaders described a USC as being tantamount to having an additional member on their staff. One leader, in fact, said that the USC would be like a coach and advisor.

Many of the leaders noted that having a USC *should help to improve the efficiency of their unit*. Leaders stated that more effective ties with the ACS through the USC would keep them from "losing" a soldier for a whole day while he/she sat in the ACS office waiting for the next available help. Appointments would be more effectively set due to better screening and referral, and paper work more streamlined. *Soldiers would be more likely to get their personal problems taken care of faster and better*. The USC would help ACS do a better job documenting soldiers' history of needs and consequently be able to develop better programs to serve their units.

Installation Leaders' Perspective

Most of the installation leaders stated that once the Unit Program was fully implemented commanders would have a better feel for the support system that is now in place and would better appreciate the process that ACS goes through to support the soldiers and their families. They believed that the Unit Program *should help commanders gain a better understanding of ACS programs and how ACS fits into unit readiness*. These leaders indicated that a commander would have more immediate access to ACS support and that the Unit Program would help ACS respond more quickly to commanders' needs. Installation leaders stated that having a USC out in the unit would provide a reliable point of contact for the commander. One installation leader noted that *a commander that is more aware of support is more willing to assist a soldier in a constructive manner* rather than act adversely towards the "problem soldier." Perceived support benefits the commander and the soldier.

Potential Benefits for Soldiers

Unit Leaders' Perspective

The primary benefits that unit leaders believed the soldier would obtain from the Unit Program were *better information and improved ACS access and service*. As a personal representative of the ACS, the USC would be able to give all newcomers first-hand information about what ACS offers when they need it. *Since the USC would be cross-trained, he/she would be better informed about the various programs the ACS has to offer* and would be in a better position to offer more directly relevant advice. Thus, leaders believed that soldiers would be more likely to know what the ACS has to offer and they would be more likely to use these services on their own accord.

Unit leaders perceived that with access to ACS information through a USC, *soldiers will feel a greater sense of confidentiality* because they will not have to rely so heavily on their commander for such information. Furthermore, leaders believed confidentiality will be enhanced among soldiers because these soldiers will be more likely to have to share their problems only with one or two ACS personnel rather than a whole line of people in and out of ACS. Additionally, leaders perceived that *soldiers will have more confidence in the ACS*. Because they have continual contact with the USC, they will know their problems, if not resolved on the first visit, will be resolved over a period of time.

Another primary benefit for soldiers was thought to be the improved service. Leaders noted that the soldier will benefit from the Unit Program because *the USC will be able to anticipate soldier needs before they get to be a crisis.* This ability will continue to improve as the Unit Program progresses. From a systems point of view, as the USC tracks unit needs, information will be provided to the ACS that helps it develop appropriate training and intervention. The soldiers will, therefore, benefit from "preventative maintenance" and tailored services. *All of the unit leaders interviewed indicated that well targeted, preventative efforts are highly valued.*

Installation Leaders' Perspective

Installation leaders indicated that as the USC shows unit commanders the type of support ACS has to offer, these commanders should become more willing to refer soldiers and their families to ACS for assistance and to make these referrals earlier. Timely referral should benefit soldiers by allowing them to deal with personal issues earlier, before they take on crisis proportions. The proactive and preventative nature of the Unit Program should also communicate to the soldier that the commander is being supportive. Under these conditions, installation leaders believed that the soldier would feel more comfortable about participating in ACS programs and would be less likely to experience the stigma often associated or believed to be associated with using social services. Installation leaders noted that under these circumstances the Unit Program would be particularly beneficial to young, enlisted people who typically need the most support and have the least understanding about how ACS operates.

Potential Benefits for Families

Unit Leaders' Perspectives

Unit leaders noted that as the soldier benefits from the Unit Program, so does the family. It was pointed out that the Unit Program *should have a ripple effect through the unit and through the family.* Not only would soldiers be more likely to use the ACS, but for many of the same reasons noted above, so would the families. Leaders believed if soldiers took home ACS information to their spouses, families would more likely to use the services that ACS has to offer and to communicate their needs to ACS. Consequently, leaders predicted *quicker response to family needs* and better acclimation of newcomers to the installation. While acknowledging that transfer of information from soldier to spouse is a hard thing to assure, leaders noted that having a USC might do a lot to encourage the exchange. It was noted that *the presence of a USC would make it more feasible to conduct focus groups and to bring families together to discuss spouse and family issues.* One unit leader pointed out that the Unit Program would make it clearer to the spouses and families of soldiers that the ACS is an asset and benefit for them, too.

Installation Leaders' Perspective

Basically, installation leaders believed that families of soldiers would benefit from the Unit Program in the same way and for the same reasons that the soldiers would benefit. Some leaders, however, noted that they were *unsure about how much information actually gets passed from soldiers to their spouses* and that how the USC dealt with this issue would primarily determine whether spouses would use ACS programs more. The general impression among these leaders was that the *Unit Program would do much to facilitate this type of communication among*

spouses. Along these lines, some leaders indicated that the Unit Program should help promote and coordinate Family Support Groups (FSG).

Essential Factors for Success

Unit Leaders' Perspective

Unit Leaders mentioned a number of factors when asked what they considered to be factors essential to the success of the Unit Program. They mentioned that *USCs must be really motivated to get out into the units*. They noted that *confidentiality must be maintained* and services must be provided in such a way that soldiers would not fear losing their jobs as a result of seeking help. Spouses and families must be able to use the ACS without fearing that they would hinder a soldier's promotion.

The ACS would need to continue to offer a wide variety of programs and emphasize the proactive nature of the Unit Program. The ACS would need to continue to look for ways to creatively offer its services. At the same time, USCs would need to be careful to *make sure that commanders have an accurate perception of what the ACS is and is not capable of doing with the resources at hand.*

There was a strong belief that the USC needs to be accessible to unit leaders. Unit leaders noted that *they expected (and needed) feedback about how much ACS is being used*. These leaders indicated that they are not so much interested in the details of a case as much as they are interested in knowing that their soldiers' needs are being addressed. Along with this kind of feedback, leaders noted that *the USC would have to be willing to take initiative and go to the commander to identify larger problems that the unit faces* or is likely to face. Unit leaders were also interested in identifying systemic problems in thier units on the basis of knowledge that the USC gains while interacting with soldiers in the unit. Along these lines, unit leaders indicated that *the USC would need to be in regular contact with the unit* and that the lines of communication between the USC and the unit leader would need to be open. Most of the unit leaders mentioned that they would be willing to provide work space for USCs out in their units if deemed necessary. They also indicated that they would be willing to make themselves available for regular discussions with their USC.

All of the unit leaders emphasized *the importance of support from the upper echelons of the installation* if the Unit Program was going to be successful. Top leadership needs to understand the intentions of the Unit Program so that they can actively "push the program down" through the ranks with confidence. Some unit leaders mentioned that perhaps information about the ACS program should always be included during quarterly training briefings.

In identifying key elements for success, unit leaders also noted a number of factors that might present problems for the Unit Program. The importance of support from installation command was emphasized; specifically, without such support the unit leaders believed that the Unit Program would fail. Unit leaders also *expressed concerns about the ratio of USCs to the number of soldiers and families that need to be served*. Leaders were concerned that if USCs are spread too thinly among the units, the "personal touch" of the Unit Program might be diminished as burnout sets in among USCs. Furthermore, leaders mentioned that *as the Unit Program*

succeeds, more ACS-related issues should surface in the units as soldiers and families feel more comfortable about seeking help. Again, the concern that leaders expressed was that these additional cases would quickly overload the relatively small number of ACS staff available to handle the work. People could perhaps become frustrated and the Unit Program might collapse under the weight of its success. Unit leaders noted that careful development of resources would be the key to dealing with these issues. They observed that *the ACS staff and the Unit Program would need time to get up to speed* (i.e., time to cross-train, and time to learn how to function within the new ACS framework) very quickly. Unit leaders pointed out that the top command support is what is most needed to help the Unit Program make it through early growing pains. One leader noted that many of the savings that should result from the Unit Program would be intangible.

Installation Leaders' Perspective

Installation leaders stated that the primary factor that would promote the success of the Unit Program will be the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the USC. For the Unit Program to be successful, the USC would have to want to work closely with the unit. *Superior lines of communication and strong trust would have to be established between unit leaders and USCs.* Installation leaders noted that some commanders would be unwilling to go forward with the Unit Program until they could be convinced that the program was not just a new fad and that no negative consequences could result from committing to the new program initiative. One installation leader said that "a commander will embrace ACS if it helps him; if it doesn't effect his command time negatively."

Installations leaders emphasized that the USCs would *have to be prepared, capable, and willing to do what they say can do.* Commanders would need to be accurately informed as soon as possible about the nature, extent, and current capabilities of ACS as configured in the Unit Program. The USC would need to know about programs and services outside of ACS. Leaders noted that *ACS cannot afford to replicate services available from other organizations within the Army or in the outside community.* For this reason, installation leaders were adamant that the Unit Program should not be rushed into implementation before these points could be adequately addressed.

In fact, most of the concerns expressed by installation leaders were associated with the implementation and evaluation of the Unit Program. Some of the leaders noted that the Unit Program is *in many ways a formal operationalization of what ACS has attempted to be in the past.* They explained that small staff sizes relative to the number of soldiers and families needing to be served has already driven ACS staff to teamwork arrangements. The unique thrust of the Unit Program, according to many of the installation leaders, was the emphasis on reaching out to the units with a specifically appointed USC and using advanced marketing techniques. Installation leaders said that their general feeling was that *the idea of the Unit Program is a good one, but that it magnifies some problems that already exist on some installations where the staff is barely adequate to respond to current demands* on ACS.

Installation leaders still see a number of issues that need to be worked out for the Unit Program to be successful. For example, these leaders stated that *careful attention would need to be paid to the recruiting, hiring, and training of USCs.* They noted that, at the present time,

many ACS staff are not yet ready to fulfill the requirements of a USC. They stated that an unprepared USC would reflect poorly on the ACS, and they feared this would hinder the success of an otherwise well conceived Unit Program. One installation leader expressed concern that ACS not get caught in the trap of "building everybody up just to let them down." Installation leaders expressed concern about the *need for well defined job descriptions of USCs* and about the way the Unit Program would affect the use of contract employees in ACS. In summary, nearly all of the leaders interviewed indicated that *they desired to move into the Unit Program as quickly as possible -- but not too fast.* Installation leaders stated that it would be imperative that the implementation of the Unit Program not outstrip funding and manpower resources.

Perception of the Role of the USC

Unit leaders generally seem to have fair expectations about what the role of the USC should be, although some are still unsure what the final job description will look like. One leader explained that he was looking for a "friend, an advisor, a source of information, and a point of contact at the ACS office." Another leader said he expected the USC to have a good working knowledge of the unit and of what ACS had to offer to his unit. Leaders *generally agreed that the USC would serve to coordinate soldier and family needs with ACS and community resources.* The USC would be expected by leaders to *take the initiative in informing the unit of new services and education opportunities.* As one leader put it, the "USC will be someone who won't necessarily know all the answers, but will be able to coordinate and get the answers when we need them."

With regard to reporting relationships, most unit leaders said the USC *should be working with the unit but reporting directly to the ACS Chief.* While many unit leaders indicated that they would consider providing work space out in the unit for the USC, a few wondered about the wisdom of such an arrangement. First of all, they mentioned that reporting relationships could become muddled. Secondly, they indicated that they were still not sure just how much time the USC should be on site. *Expectations among unit leaders about "time on site" ranged widely from 1 day/week to a couple of hours every quarter.* As one leader put it, the USC should be out in the unit "more than enough, but not enough to get in the way."

All Unit Leaders expected their USCs would be well trained across all areas of ACS. They also *expected that USCs would have a good understanding of military life and its schedule and demands.* The general consensus was that to know the military is to know the soldier and the issues that the families of soldiers face. One leader stated that a USC would be considered "a fish out of water" if he/she did not have some understanding of military protocol. It was also made clear, however, that while prior military experience would be helpful, the USC would not necessarily be expected to be a military person.

Leaders stated that they expected that the USC would have good interpersonal skills and know good instructional techniques. If members of other armed forces besides the Army were on the installation, the USC would be expected to have a working knowledge of these soldiers and any needs characteristic to them. All unit leaders pointed out that *the bottom line here is that the USC should want to help soldiers and their families.*

With regard to personal characteristics, unit leaders said USCs should be an approachable, friendly, attentive, patient, credible, extroverted, positive, confident, flexible, open-minded, action-oriented, highly energetic individual -- *one who is willing to take initiative and who is a self-starter*. Leaders emphasized that the USC should have a "can do" attitude and be interested in promoting the soldiers' interests One leader suggested that the USC ought to develop some characteristics of the soldiers he/she would be dealing with (i.e., "paratrooper mentality," and "be in good physical shape"). All leaders said the USC should be results-oriented and not full of empty promises.

Conclusion

Overall, both installation and unit leaders appeared to be *very pleased with concept of the Unit Program and to be very supportive of it*. They also seem to have realistic perceptions of the parameters of the Unit Program and the role of the USC. Unit leaders indicated that they were looking forward to the help that they believed the USC would be capable of providing. As one leader put it, "I think this program can really help my guys -- and therefore me." Installation leaders were looking forward to the better service they believe the Unit Program should offer. Both sets of leaders have *some reservations about the amount of resources (time, funding, and personnel) ACS has available to it to run the Unit Program* as it should be run. As one installation leader noted, "this sounds like a good idea and it fits well with the Army, but it will stretch resources."

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PILOT INSTALLATIONS

The installations involved in these site visits were just beginning the process of implementing the new ACS Unit Program. This report chronicles very early changes in ACS programming and the early effects of those changes on installation and unit leadership and on the ACS program staff. The programs visited with the most experience had begun this process less than nine months earlier. Most of the programs visited had only two to three months of experience. Thus, the observations being made should be considered characteristic of programs in an early implementation stage of the Unit Program.

Lessons Learned about Unit Involvement

The role of the Unit Services Coordinator (USC) needs to be clearly stated and discussed. Each of these installations experienced some struggle around the role and scope of the USC functions. This lack of clarity was somewhat expected, given the pioneering aspect of this new function with the ACS. Still, ACS Directors and staff need to give considerable attention to defining this role for their installation and clearly articulating that role to installation and unit leaders and other agency providers.

The ACS Director and the USCs must be clear about what the Unit Program can and cannot do for the unit. This message was heard from both ACS staff and from the unit and installation leaders. It is important that expectations not be raised too far or too soon or the program can be viewed as an early failure, even before it has had a chance to work. Expectations should initially be modest and every effort should be made to meet those expectations. Expectations should also be appropriate to the capabilities of the USCs as well as the needs of the unit.

Spending a great deal of time in the unit is not necessary. Most commanders did not expect their USCs to be present in their unit for major portions of time. The activities for USCs can be accomplished in relatively brief periods of engagement. The key to success appears to be effective communication, coordination and serving as a point of contact to the unit while at the ACS Center. The amount of time needs to be carefully negotiated with each unit and with other demands that are required at the ACS.

The Unit Program changes how commanders think of ACS. One clear message from the site visits was the common theme that commanders views of ACS were changed, often significantly, by the introduction of the Unit Program. Many of them became much more aware of ACS and of what ACS could offer to them, their soldiers and families. There were some skeptics but the overwhelming response was on the positive side with commanders feeling much better about the potential for ACS programs and their ability to support their troops.

Soldiers and families have an increased awareness and understanding ACS. Interviews with soldiers and families were infrequent during the site visits, largely because of the newness of the initiative. But those persons who were interviewed indicated strong support for the Unit Programs. They believed that this would substantially improve the quality of services that they would receive. Meetings with spouses from Family Support Groups led to particularly favorable

comments, especially at one installation where a USC had a good working relationships with several FSGs.

Lessons Learned about Cross-Training

Training on the USC role and its responsibilities needs to be done prior to cross-training. The context for cross-training should be the development of an effective USC capacity. When the cross-training was done prior to introducing and clarifying the role of the USC, this lead to confusion about the reasons for cross-training and why the cross-training involved such a wide scope.

ACS staff are often surprised about how much there is to know about the various programs. Another common theme was the finding that staff believed that they knew more about one another's programs then they often did. Not only did they appreciate the technical information that many of their colleagues held but this lead to a greater sense of teamwork among the members of the ACS staff.

Being well informed about ACS helps in gaining support from the unit. Unit commanders and supervisors expressed a hope that the ACS staff assigned to their units would be well informed about the various programs and services that the ACS had to offer. Those who had experienced cross-trained USCs were very pleased with knowledge that they had about ACS programs as well as other programs and services offered in the post community.

Training and cross-training must be ongoing. Cross-training cannot be done completely prior to the early implementation of the Unit Program. It is difficult to be able to communicate effectively even the basics of the program after only a few hours of cross-training. Therefore, it was recommended by ACS staff that ongoing cross-training be conducted as a normal part of ACS staff meetings. This allows staff to be updated on new program components and new regulations, or to learn from one another about the use of this information in various unit settings.

Some cross-training should also be given to ACS staff who are not in the USC role. One of the problems experienced at some of the sites was a growing perception that USCs were privileged over other ACS staff. Some contract and clerical staff desired some level of cross-training so that they could also appreciate the breadth of programs and services offered within their own agency. Again, this supported the overall notion of ACS as a team working together to meet the needs of soldiers and families in the community.

Lessons Learned about Unit Orientation

Talking Army language is a key to building confidence in the units. Familiarity with organizational culture, customs and courtesies is a critical component in serving as an effective USC. Commanders who were interviewed did not expect ACS personnel to know everything about them but they did expect a person who would not embarrass the ACS or the unit with inappropriate recognition of ranks or unfamiliarity with military language. Preparation for "speaking Army" is a critical factor in building confidence in the ACS on the part of unit leadership.

ACS Directors often overestimate staff knowledge of the Army system. Many Directors interviewed were surprised to learn that their staffs needed more help in becoming familiar with Army terms and customs. Also, time spent in unit orientation was found to be valued by ACS staff. Those who had been around the Army enjoyed the opportunity to share some of their "war stories" while others valued the technical aspects of learning unit and installation histories, going to post museums, and the like.

Mission support means understanding the mission. It is difficult for ACS staff to talk about supporting the mission when they are not clear as to the mission of the unit and the installation. Becoming familiar with the unit and its contribution to the Army mission made the USCs feel more attached to their units and increased their sense of responsibility for supporting the unit's soldiers and families.

Lessons Learned about Team Building

Teamwork is improved when time is set aside for USCs to share their experiences with one another. At those installations where regular meetings were being held between ACS staff functioning as USCs, there was a greater sense of cooperation and teamwork being maintained. Opportunities to regularly update each other led to a greater communication among USCs and other ACS staff and management.

Teamwork helps reduce the stress of added job responsibilities. During this period of major organizational transition, efforts to strengthen the level of teamwork among the ACS staff helped to give opportunities to ventilate problems and to jointly find solutions. Deliberate efforts to encourage and maintain a sense of teamwork were viewed by ACS staff as positive and a means for more quickly resolving difficulties.

An effective referral system requires teamwork. The ACS Unit Program demands a much more effective referral system since cross-referrals are significantly increased under this program. This means the staff have to trust one another to follow up on referrals they make. Unsatisfactory service is much more likely to have a negative impact on commanders and supervisors at assigned units and this can sour their relationship with USC. Thus, a strong sense of teamwork helps to build the capacity to make the referral system work that is required under the unit program.

Lessons Learned about Monitoring

Monitoring needs to be understood as essential to effective program implementation. Relatively little attention was being given to monitoring, even though such program tracking will help identify program success and will also help identify needed program adjustments.

Monitoring forms should be kept simple. It is clear from the review that ACS staff are concerned about the amount of paperwork that often accompanies new programs. The forms that they were provided in the Unit Program Training Manual were deemed to be a good starting point but most of the programs attempted to simplify the forms as much as possible to keep reporting requirements minimized.

Staff review of forms increases acceptance. When ACS staff have an opportunity to participate in developing the forms that they will ultimately have to use, their investment in the process and in the use of the forms increases. At those installations where staff participated in this process actively, they reported being more satisfied with the forms and they were more likely to indicate a desire to use them.

Referrals and unit services must be tracked. It is clear from the site visits that USCs rely on accurate and timely referrals. They rely on their referrals being made and that the education and other services that they request are supplied as soon as possible. Having an appropriate form for tracking referrals and services helps to maintain creditability with the unit, especially when commanders ask about progress in meeting the needs of soldiers and families.

Key Implementation Lessons Learned

Recognize staff concerns. Because ACS staff were not involved in creating the Unit Program, and because they did not/will not receive the training Directors received, their concerns about being able to "pull it off" are substantial. This requires ACS Directors to be especially mindful of staff stress and morale levels.

Involve all ACS staff in planning. One of the key lessons learned from the pilots was the need to involve everyone in the ACS at some level in the planning for the Unit Program. Failure to involve some aspects of the staff, such as contract, clerical or other support staff, typically led to morale problems within ACS. People who do not feel part of this new thrust in the organization feel second-rate and this can lead to undermining staff cohesion.

Garner senior leadership support as soon as possible. It is very important for installation leaders to be appraised of plans and have an opportunity participate in setting the course for the new direction. Not only to does this result in stronger support for ACS, but also gathers support from other agencies and passes support down through the chain of command to the units that need to be served.

Take time to prepare. Properly establishing an ACS Unit Program takes time. The pilot installations were under an accelerated schedule that often caused difficulty. The installations that had started this effort prior to being pilots were able to bring their staffs and installations on more slowly and this led to broader and deeper support for the program. It is also possible to take too long to prepare but it is important to find that point at which one is ready to implement and then to do so with the full inertia of support that can be garnered.

It is important to know your units. As part of the preparation, it is critical that time be invested in understanding the situation and resources of the units with which USCs are going to be working. Time should be invested both before formal contacts are made with units as well as early in the unit contact process, prior to services being rendered. It is critical that unit needs assessment be conducted too, in order to prevent services being offered routinely without understanding the context within which an appropriate service strategy can be developed.

Unit consultation should be phased in. The pilot sites found it very difficult to offer to all units at the same time the same level of unit assistance. Those installations that phased in their consultation found it easier to learn from their early experiences and this benefited subsequent unit assignments. It also kept expectations from rising faster than the ability of the ACS to respond.

Meet regularly to share experiences. The need for regular meetings to discuss lessons that are being learned and challenges that need to be overcome was very evident in the pilots. Not only did meeting together build esprit de corps within ACS, it kept the level of tension from growing without the safety valve of other staff and ACS management being able to solve some of the problems and release some of the anxiety. Meetings also helped balance uneven work loads as people realized when and how they could help one another during difficult periods.

Overall, it can be expected that the implementation of the Unit Program will result in some increases in staff anxiety about their ability to meet their current program needs as well as serve their installation community in a more effective way. On the one hand initial work load demands are likely to increase but on the other hand, the installations that pilot tested the concept found that leadership support increased and the ACS benefited from the reorganization of its staff. It is too early to tell how all of this will stabilize but there is no doubt that the commanders and supervisors interviewed expected a significantly transformed relationship between ACS and their units in a positive and constructive manner.